
Questionnaire

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General information

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Job title: **Head of the Department of Rural and Fisheries Network**

Date of interview: **December 2008**

Country (or region, if applicable): **Estonia**

Measure (number and title): **Leader (411, 413, 421, 431)**

Section 4 – LEADER approach (Axis 4)

4.1 Which is the responsible authority for the implementation of Axis 4?

Ministry of Agriculture – managing authority

Paying Agency (Agricultural Registers and Information Board (ARIB)) - implementing authority

Rural Economy Research Center (Rural Network Unit) – Leader Information Centre, co-ordinating activities of LEADER Network, organising trainings, providing information

4.2 Which procedures are followed to select LAGs? Please describe them (expression of interests, public calls, etc.).

Public call based on criteria established by the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture (June 12, 2008 No 59). Applications were submitted to the Paying Agency.

Comment: There were 24 LAGs already supported within Estonian National Development Plan (ENDP) 2004–2006 measure 3.6 “Local initiative based development projects – LEADER. These groups continued their work with strategies and submitted applications for the implementation of the strategy. As most (94%) of the Estonian territory was covered with the above mentioned 24 LAGs, only 2 new LAGs accrued in 2008. Deadline for the applications was the same both for the development of the strategy (2 LAGs) as well as for the implementation of the strategy (24 LAGs).

4.3 How many days the approval of Local Action Groups (by the Authority responsible of Axis 4) needs?

TIME	
1-7 days	

8-15 days	
16-30 days	
2-3 months	X
4-6 months	(X)
7-9 months	
10-12 months	
> 12 months	

Comment: As set by the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture (June 12, 2008 No 59), the Paying Agency will approve the applications within 60 working days. If there is need for additional information, time for approval could be extended up to 90 working days. Within this time applications will be assessed by the Assessment Committee as part of the support depends on quality of the action plans (in the case of developing the strategy) and on quality of the strategy (in the case of implementing the strategy), see more details in p. 4.4.

4.4 Which are the criteria used for the LAGs selection in the current programming period? Please illustrate them.

The measure is implemented in Estonian rural area. For the purposes of this measure a rural area covers rural municipalities (incl. towns within rural municipalities) and small towns of up to 4000 inhabitants.

Minimum requirements for an applicant include:

Applicant should be NGO, established with the aim to develop local life, and satisfying set criteria, incl. criteria related to the territory and membership.

- Borders of the territory of the LAG coincide with the borders of the local government units being members of this action group;
- Members of the LAG must not be members of any other LAG at the same time;
- Territory of the LAG comprises rural municipalities and towns with common economic, cultural and social interests, of which the territories are located in the same geographic region;
- Size of the territory of the LAG and the size of the population must provide sufficient critical mass of human, financial and economic resources needed for the implementation of a sustainable development strategy;
- Size of the population of the activity area of the LAG must be between 10 000–100 000, but justified variations of population size are allowed;
- For the establishment of a LAG, its membership must include at least 2 local government units and the entrepreneurs and citizens' associations active in the same region;

- LAG must be open towards accepting new members;
- LAG must have developed or must intend to develop a local development strategy;
- Share of the public sector on the decision-making levels of the LAG must be less than 50%;
- LAGs must be ready to select the projects to be financed according to the local development strategy, incl. co-operation projects. The statutes for the LAG must provide the mechanism for implementing the strategy and for selecting the projects to be financed, and also the principles of selection used by the selecting body;
- Innovation must be an important element of the local development strategies existing or developed by the LAGs;
- Local development strategies must include demarcation principles, regarding other support funds.

Comment: Above mentioned criteria are basically eligibility criteria for the LAGs for applying the support under Leader measure. There is no separate procedure for selecting the LAGs. Leader Measure is divided between two options: Option 1 - Acquisition of LAG skills i.e. support for the development of the strategy (only available for those who didn't receive support under the ENDP 2004-2006 measure 3.6), and Option 2 - Implementation of local development strategies (for those 24 LAGs who have received support under ENDP 3.6). After completing Option 1 LAGs can carry out Option 2.

All LAGs satisfying the set criteria are technically eligible for the support, but for assessing the quality, Minister of Agriculture has formed an Assessment Committee. All LAGs receiving at least 20% of the maximum points available, will be eligible for funding.

Allocation of the resources for both options depends also on quality. For the option 1 there will be basic funding (equal sum to each LAG) and in addition to this, quality of the submitted action plans will be assessed, and based on this additional finances (could be more than basic sum) will be allocated. For the option 2 there will be basic funding (equal sum to each LAG, 20% of the budget), secondly socio-economic criteria will be used (e.g. population, area, income per capita), and thirdly quality of the local strategies will be assessed (according to this best LAG will receive 20% extra funding and the worst no extra funding beside the one allocated by basic support and additional socio-economic criteria).

Stated assessment criteria (slightly different for Option 1 and 2) are used. These include e.g. rate of involvement of the whole region and the population groups; consideration of the partnership principle on the level of the LAG; economic viability and sustainability of the action plan/strategy; including the possible involvement of different population groups, integrated approach of the action plan/strategy and possibilities for joint use with other programmes; elements of regional and international co-operation, innovative qualities of the action plan/strategy; effective use of local development potential, involvement of youth; clarity of the strategy; justification of the budget; applicability of the time schedule.

4.5 Are they different from the criteria adopted in 2000-2006 period for the LEADER approach?

Yes, but minor	X
No	
NA	

4.6 If they are different, which criteria have been changed and in which aspects do they differ from the previous period?

There are minor changes compared to the ENDP 2004–2006 measure 3.6 “Local initiative based development projects – LEADER”, e.g. in the statutes of the LAG basic principles for the selection of the individual projects should be set.

4.7 For what reasons have they been changed?

4.8 What is the role of LAG in all sub-phases of Local Action Plan implementation? Please, design the institutional and stakeholders map of the Local Action Plan implementation. An example of mapping is given below.

Institutional map of a Local Action Plan (generic)

Phases	Actors and level of implementation		
	NATIONAL LEVEL	REGIONAL LEVEL	LOCAL LEVEL

Phase 1: Definition of detailed implementation procedures for LAGs selection

Preparation and approval of selection criteria of LAGs

Ministry of Agriculture

Preparation of application forms and guidelines

Ministry of Agriculture
Paying Agency

Preparation of public calls for the LAGs' selection

Phase 2: Provision of information and technical assistance to LAGs

Holding meetings with potential LAGs or partners

Ministry of Agriculture
Leader Information Centre
Paying Agency

Potential beneficiaries (LAGs)

Provision of one-to-one information and assistance

Phase 3: Approval of Local Action Groups

Collection, assessment and scoring of applications

Paying Agency
Ministry of Agriculture
Assessment Committee established by the Minister of Agriculture

Paying Agency
Regional offices

LAG

Approval of list of eligible Local Action Groups

Financial commitments and formal decision of approval of LAGs

Phase 4: Selection and approval of individual applications

Preparation and approval of selection criteria, application forms and guidelines

Ministry of Agriculture & Paying Agency
(eligibility criteria and application forms)

LAG
(selection criteria, guidelines, public calls, provision of information and technical assistance)

Public calls for individual applications from local farms/firms

Provision of information, technical assistance to applicants and territorial animation

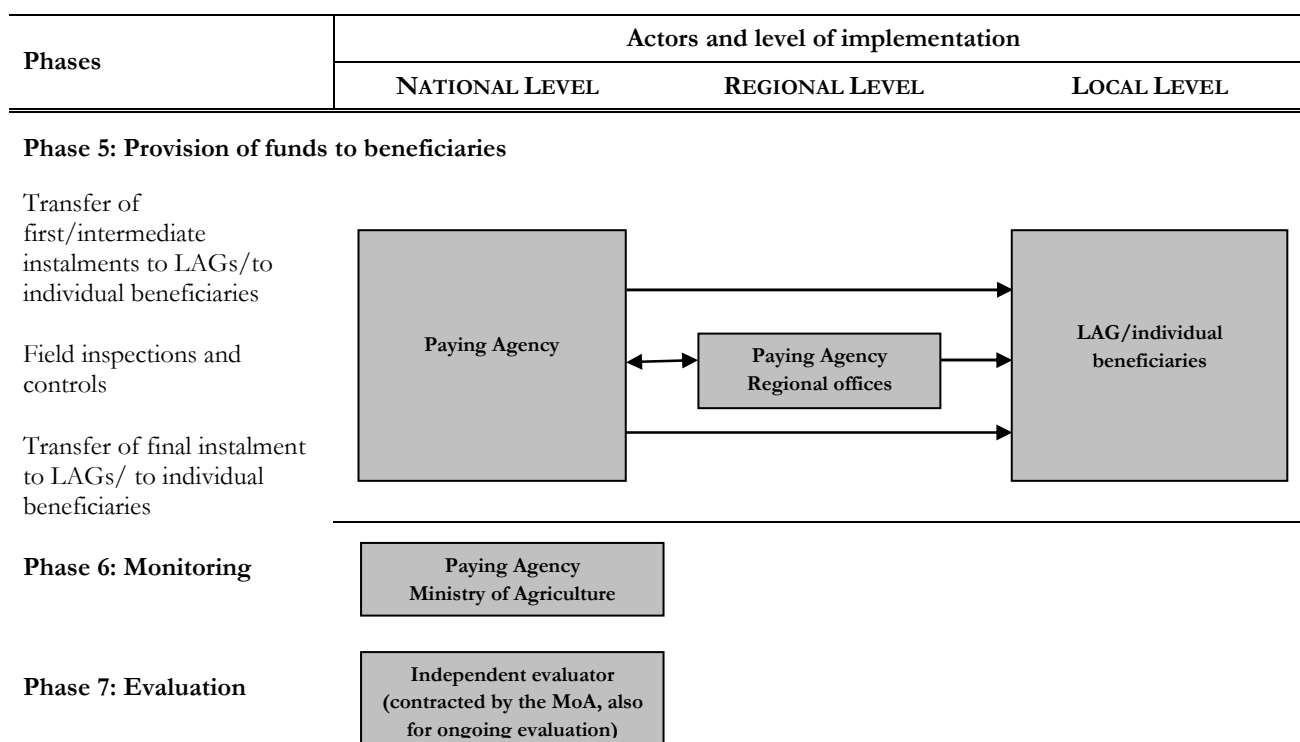
Collection, assessment and approval of individual applications

LAG

Final Approval of individual applications

Paying Agency

Individual beneficiary



4.9 Are the selection criteria for individual applications defined and decided by the LAGs?

Yes	X
No	
Partially	

Comment: Selection criteria are set by LAG, eligibility criteria by the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture (and controlled by the Paying Agency)

4.10 In case criteria are only partially defined and decided, please explain.

4.11 Are application approved and selected by LAGs?

Yes	
No	
Partially	X

4.12 In case applications are only partially approved and selected by the LAGs, please explain.

Approval is done at two levels – first approval is done by the LAG, who is evaluating the projects based on criteria set in local strategy. Project should be in accordance with the aims set by the strategy and implementation plan. After receiving written approval from the LAG, project applicant will submit application to the Paying Agency, who is assessing if general eligibility criteria are met and is approving the application.

4.13 Has the RDP or the public call imposed any constraints on the identification of the responsible subject of LAG management? In case of positive answer, please indicate who preferably should be this subject.

Yes		
No	X	

4.14 How many days the approval of the single application (by the LAG or by other responsible subjects) needs?

TIME	
1-7 days	
8-15 days	
16-30 days	
2-3 months	
4-6 months	X
7-9 months	
10-12 months	
> 12 months	

Comment: It could take also longer, because at first LAG should approve the project and then there is up to 60 working days (could be extended up to 90 days if needed) for the final approval by the Paying Agency. It is too early to tell what will be the average time for approval as there are no individual projects submitted yet.